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ABSTRACT

A county with insufficient population and/or assessed valuation to qualify for a community college district may establish a provisional community college district. This proposal, prepared by the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona, intends to demonstrate how the provisional community college district is a logical and useful step in the progression to the establishment of a community college district. This step can occur when the population and assessed valuation of the county demonstrate that the county can support a college of high quality without disproportionate state aid. The proposal presents several criteria that should be met to insure genuine local control, while assuring the quality of community college programs and services and realistic funding mechanisms. The procedure for establishing a provisional community college district follows the same path as for the established community college district, except the population and assessed valuation criteria would not apply. Appendix 1 describes alternatives presently available to unorganized community college districts. Appendix 2 details the requirements to form a community college district. A listing of the current assessed valuation and population figures for the four unorganized counties is presented in Appendix 3. (JJL)

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State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona

Provisional Community College Districts: A Proposed Method of Extending Community College Services to Unorganized Counties

Introduction

Eleven of Arizona's fifteen counties presently have organized community college districts. In order for citizens of the remaining four counties to receive community college programs and services, the unorganized county must either contract with an organized community college district to provide services within the county, or the county must pay an out-of-county student fee for each county resident who takes courses at one of the Arizona community colleges. Unorganized counties may create secondary tax levies to support in-county programs, out-of-county fees, or both. Unorganized counties may also pass secondary levies to build facilities to house community college programs provided by a contracting community college district. Appendix I, a 1993 legislative platform statement adopted by the Arizona Community College System, describes the alternatives presently available to unorganized counties.

Appendix II details the requirements to form a community college district. A listing of the current assessed valuation and population figures for the four unorganized counties is presented in Appendix III. None of the counties without an organized community college district meets either the population or assessed valuation requirements.

From the perspective of the unorganized county, the lack of population or assessed valuation does not remove the need for community college programs and services, and the presence of a locally-sponsored community college is seen by some as essential to the development of the economy of the county.

But from the perspective of the established community colleges, the creation of a new district, especially one that might require extraordinary State support via equalization funding, is viewed as having a potential for further reducing the already-diminished State Aid funding.

Criteria for an Equitable Proposal

It appears that a viable proposal for addressing the desire of unorganized counties to have their own community college districts must balance several requirements that, at least to a degree, are antagonistic to one another. These requirements include at least the following:

- **Quality.** It is essential that each Arizona community college be accredited by the North Central Association. This is not easily accomplished. An underfunded district without the ability to provide adequate facilities, well qualified faculty and staff, student support services, basic laboratories and instructional equipment, libraries, and the like will not likely achieve accreditation.

- **Access.** All of Arizona's citizens deserve to have convenient access to the programs and services provided by a comprehensive community college. Community college students often pursue their education while continuing to work full time. This makes traveling long distances undesirable, and relocating to another city impossible.

- **Local Identification/Local Control.** It is important to local communities that their community college be identified with their community and that they feel that they have control, or at least a major say, in decisions regarding the type and amount of educational programs and services that are provided, as well as the time and place of their delivery.

- **The Perception of Fairness.** Fairness is in the eyes of the beholder, and the perception of fairness depends greatly on the position and circumstance of the individual. This may, at least initially, be the most difficult criteria to satisfy. The proposal must assure that the unorganized county does not appear to be "just looking for a cheap way to beat the system" while, at the same time, the proposal must provide genuine advantages to the unorganized county that are not available under existing regulations.

A Provisional Community College District

A provisional community college district, as outlined below, will provide most of the advantages of a community college district, yet will assure that quality is maintained and that the institution will be fully accredited. The proposal will be presented a section at a time, with a brief discussion of each section.

- ***A county with insufficient population and/or assessed valuation to qualify for a Community College District may establish a Provisional Community College District.***

- ***The procedure for establishing a Provisional Community College District would follow the same general path as for the establishment of a Community College District except that the population and assessed valuation criteria would not apply.***

- ***The Provisional Community College District would have a Local Board that would have the same ability to tax, build facilities, etc., as a Community College District Governing Board.***

The idea is to create a district with real, but limited, powers that is as much like a community college district as possible. This would be a real district with considerable power and authority, and the board would be responsive to the citizens of the county. The State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona would provide guidance and support for a county wishing to develop a Provisional Community College District.

- ***A Provisional Community College District Board would be able to employ a small staff, but would have to contract with an Arizona Community College District for all instructional and student services within regulations and guidelines developed by the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona.***

This addresses the quality criterion. The Provisional Community College District Board could create one or more sites that would operate as Community College Centers. They would be as operationally separate as accreditation standards permit, but would rely upon a host college for a number of services. This is about the only way a county without the population or assessed valuation necessary to support a full community college operation can create a college that will have the benefits of full accreditation in a reasonable time.

- ***A county with a Provisional Community College District that has a dedicated community college facility and provides at least 75% of the total Community College FTSE coming from the county with in-county instruction would be considered an Organized County for purposes of ARS ' 15-1469 (reciprocal waiver of out of county tuition reimbursement).***

This provision addresses one facet of the fairness criterion. Unorganized counties are required to reimburse community college districts for residents of the unorganized county who attend community

colleges in Arizona. Counties with organized community college districts are not required to make such payments. The criteria outlined above are intended to establish a threshold level that will demonstrate that the Provisional Community College District is functioning sufficiently like a Community College District to warrant the reciprocal waiver of out of county tuition reimbursement. The unorganized county will have demonstrated that it is serious about providing community college services to its citizens. While exacting, the requirements are not inconsistent with what other rural counties are doing to provide community college programs and services to their citizens.

- ***Provisional Community College Districts would not qualify for equalization aid.***

This provision addresses the genuine fear that allowing unorganized counties to have their own districts would dry up State Aid funding to the existing districts. In the current economic and political climate this provision is seen as essential to the plan's acceptability to existing community college districts.

- ***Once it satisfied the population and assessed valuation criteria, a county with a Provisional Community College District could convert to a regular Community College District by a vote of the electorate, approval of the State Board, and the Legislature.***

This is intended to show that the Provisional Community College district is a logical, and useful, step in the progression to the establishment of a Community College District when the population and assessed valuation of the county demonstrate that the county can support a college of high quality without disproportionate State Aid.

Thus, this proposal addresses each of the criteria listed. It provides genuine local control while assuring quality of community college programs and services and is realistic in its funding mechanisms.

One additional point must be emphasized. The development of a Provisional Community College District is but an additional option. Nothing in this proposal would require an unorganized county to do anything. If the citizens of the county are satisfied with the service they are presently receiving from an adjacent community college, the present arrangements could remain in force without modification

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Summary:
Provisional Community College District

- A county with insufficient population and/or assessed valuation to qualify for a Community College District may establish a Provisional Community College District.
- The procedure for establishing a Provisional Community College District would follow the same general path as for the establishment of a Community College District except that the population and assessed valuation criteria would not apply.
- The Provisional Community College District would have a Local Board that would have the same ability to tax, build facilities, etc., as a Community College District Governing Board.
- A Provisional Community College District Board would be able to employ a small staff, but would have to contract with an Arizona Community College District for all instructional and student services within regulations and guidelines developed by the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona.
- A county with a Provisional Community College District that has a dedicated community college facility and provides at least 75% of the total Community College FTSE coming from the county

with in-county instruction would be considered an Organized County for purposes of ARS § 15-1469 (reciprocal waiver of out of county tuition reimbursement).

- Provisional Community College Districts would not qualify for equalization aid.
- Once it satisfied the population and assessed valuation criteria, a county with a Provisional Community College District could convert to a regular Community College District by a vote of the electorate, approval of the State Board, and the Legislature

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APPENDIX I.

Arizona Community Colleges Position Statement: Unorganized Counties

1993 Legislative Session

Position Statement Alternatives are in place to provide high quality educational opportunities in unorganized counties. By using these alternatives, an unorganized county can enjoy virtually all the benefits of a full community college program. The formation of new districts without the resources to adequately support a full community college program is not in the best interest of the State. Lowering threshold requirements would not lower the county's considerable financial commitment necessary to sustain a viable community college district.

Access Supported The Arizona community college system strongly supports the availability of high quality community college educational opportunities for every resident of Arizona. Arizona community colleges understand and appreciate the desire of certain counties which do not presently have an organized community college district to enjoy the benefits of a full community college program.

Requirements Community college districts require considerable financial commitments to sustain quality programs. The taxpayers from within these districts must provide a substantial portion of the capital outlay and operating cost of the community college. For this reason, the Arizona Revised Statutes prescribe threshold levels of population and assessed valuation before a county can petition to form a community college district.

Alternatives Current law provides alternatives for citizens in unorganized counties to receive a substantial level of community college services without actually forming a district. Unorganized counties may secure community college services from organized districts or they may petition to join with a contiguous county to jointly operate a community college district.

Unorganized counties may approve a secondary tax levy to operate community college programs in their county or to support their students taking community college courses in another county. They may receive full credit for State aid for their students taking courses under intergovernmental agreements. They may approve a permanent secondary tax levy to build a campus, and they may qualify for the same matching provisions to construct a new campus as an organized district.

Petition and election requirements for merging districts are specified in statute.

APPENDIX II.

Population and Assessed Valuation Requirements to Form a Community College District

Arizona Revised Statutes

§ 15-1402.Community college districts; requirements

- Community college districts may be organized under the provisions of this chapter for a single county, two or more contiguous counties or an existing community college district and contiguous counties not part of any existing community college district and contiguous counties not part of any community college district if the proposed district has a primary assessed valuation, based on the valuation for the preceding year, of at least four hundred forty-eight million, seventeen thousand, two hundred dollars and a minimum population of forty thousand persons who are fifteen or more years of age, as determined by the most recent federal census.

- Beginning with fiscal year 1993-1994, the minimum primary assessed valuation required to organize a community college district as provided by subsection A increases each year by the percentage change in total primary assessed valuation for all of the districts with a population of less than five hundred thousand persons according to the most recent United States decennial census using actual primary assessed valuation numbers from the prior two years.

APPENDIX III.

Assessed Valuation and Population of the Unorganized Counties

County	Assessed Valuation	Population 15 Years and Older
Apache	$397,282,439	39,644
Gila	275,957,985	31,327
Greenlee	181,656,513	5,749
Santa Cruz	142,417,027	21,168
Threshold Value ARS § 15-1402	$448,017,200	40,000

APPENDIX IV.

Schedule of Reimbursement Charges Payable by the Four Unorganized Counties for 1991-92

	Apache County	Gila County	Greenlee County	Santa Cruz County
Cochise CCC Dist.	$10,869	$9,075	$7,080	$91,078
Graham CCC Dist.	$73,735	136,127	$208,919	$6,673
Maricopa CCC Dist.	$221,722	$199,717	$16,342	$22,093
Mohave CCC Dist.	$0	$0	$0	$0
Navajo CCC Dist.	$110,354	$13,701	$0	$0
Pima CCC Dist.	$37,508	$33,789	$19,230	$381,565
Pinal CCC Dist.	$67,204	$127,434	$4,121	$4,755
Yavapai CCC Dist.	$68,658	$28,120	$3,652	$10,591
Yuma/La Paz CCC Dist.	$6,975	$6,241	$0	$23,494
Totals	$597,025	$554,204	$259,345	$540,249